

their shot at their American dream. While we cannot guarantee happiness for any of them, those of us in this Chamber can pave the way with an abundance of opportunity.

As the dreams and stories of so many Americans are interweaved, this American portrait—this tapestry of blues and grays, of pastels and earth tones—will keep this Republic in good shape. It is our diversity that makes us great. As long as we pass on our American values that have seen this Nation through so many dark nights, we will succeed through current and future trials and conflicts.

May God bless this great Republic.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, shortly before Easter, I joined a number of my colleagues on a visit to the border to get a firsthand look at the crisis that we are facing. And make no mistake, this is a crisis. Customs and Border Protection apprehensions at our southern border last month were at their highest level in nearly 20 years—20 years.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported more than 172,000 encounters with individuals attempting to cross our southern border in March alone. And that is just the individuals they encountered. We don't know how many individuals came across without being identified and are currently residing illegally in our country.

Nearly 19,000 unaccompanied children crossed our southern border in March alone, the largest number ever recorded in a single month. That is 19,000 children making an incredibly dangerous journey without their parents, at the mercy of smugglers, human traffickers, or any other dangerous individual that they might encounter.

Needless to say, the surge at our border is having very serious effects. Border Patrol agents have been pulled off the border to deal with the influx of migrants and unaccompanied children, leaving the borders undermanned. And the government is straining to deal with processing the massive number of people who have come across the border. One facility that we visited was at 16 times its allotted capacity.

The administration has had to deploy the Federal Emergency Management Agency—that is right, our government's disaster recovery Agency—to help deal with the influx of unaccompanied children. And the Department of Health and Human Services has been forced to open emergency shelters and ask the Department of Defense for temporary housing on bases.

Despite the pandemic, adequate COVID safety measures have been unable to be maintained because the numbers needing to be housed have been so great.

While the administration would like to attribute this crisis to the previous administration or anything but the

current President's policies, the truth is, President Biden bears a lot of the responsibility for the situation. His Presidential campaign made it clear that border security was not going to be one of his priorities.

And since taking office, what signals have he and his administration sent? On his very first day in office, President Biden rescinded the declaration of a national emergency at our southern border; he halted construction on the border wall; and he rescinded a Trump administration order that called for the government to faithfully execute our immigration laws, including removals for visa overstays and limiting funding to sanctuary cities—all on his first day.

And that is not all. The President's Department of Homeland Security also issued guidelines that same day pausing deportations, except under certain conditions. The effect of President Biden's actions was to declare to the world that the U.S. borders are effectively open.

That may or may not have been what President Biden and his administration intended, but it certainly has been the effect. The message received by prospective migrants has been, if you can make it to the U.S. border and claim asylum, whether legitimate or not, even if you illegally cross the border, you are in.

Trump administration policies like "Remain in Mexico" and the third country asylum rule relieved pressure on our overburdened immigration case-work and enforcement efforts at the southern border. They allowed for asylum claims to be vetted long before individuals reached the U.S. border, removing the need for people to uproot themselves and attempt a dangerous border crossing only to be sent back home again.

But in his rush to distance himself from President Trump and appease the open borders wing of the Democratic Party, President Biden eliminated these policies, which has helped create the humanitarian crisis we are currently facing.

Under the Biden administration, there is little deterrent or fear of punishment for those who seek to enter the country illegally, knowing that they can claim asylum and join the backlog of roughly 1.3 million cases while they wait in the United States. And the humanitarian crisis that we are seeing at the border is the result.

President Biden and Democrats would like to present themselves as the compassionate alternative to the Trump administration, but there is nothing compassionate about policies that invite illegal immigration, that encourage people to attempt the dangerous border crossing, to run the risk of death or injury or exploitation or disease.

Inviting the surge at the border also shows a significant lack of compassion or consideration for Americans, particularly those in border communities.

While many of those trying to cross our borders illegally are simply looking for a better life, which is not an excuse for going outside our established legal pathways, there are also a lot of dangerous people—dangerous people attempting illegal border crossings: drug traffickers, weapons traffickers, human traffickers, gang members. And when Border Patrol agents have been pulled off the border to help manage the immigration influx, it is not going to be too surprising if we discover that more of these dangerous individuals have made their way into our country. And that represents a real danger to Americans.

Americans living in towns and cities along our southern border are at the greatest risk of having their communities disrupted by border-related criminal activity, but the effects of drug trafficking and other criminal activity across our southern border are felt throughout our entire country.

President Biden helped cause this crisis. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. And he could start ending this crisis today by making it clear that his administration will enforce immigration laws and that the way to come to this country is to come legally. He could also help by recommitting our country to serious border security along our southern border, including construction, continued construction of the border wall.

For the sake of the unaccompanied children and all those trying to cross our borders and for the sake of the Americans who have been endangered by his policies, I hope—I hope that President Biden will take action.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON GENSLER NOMINATION

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the rollcall vote scheduled for 11:45 begin now, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 148 Ex.]

#### YEAS—53

Baldwin	Durbin	Luján
Bennet	Feinstein	Lummis
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Manchin
Booker	Grassley	Markey
Brown	Hassan	Menendez
Cantwell	Heinrich	Merkley
Cardin	Hickenlooper	Murphy
Carper	Hirono	Murray
Casey	Kaine	Ossoff
Collins	Kelly	Padilla
Coons	King	Peters
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Reed
Duckworth	Leahy	Rosen